

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

98 (1) (currently amended) A tailgate assembly comprising an inner panel; an outer panel; and at least one stiffening member which is operatively contained between said inner panel and said outer panel, said at least one stiffening member having a first flange portion which is coupled to said inner panel, a second flange portion which is coupled to said outer panel, and a broad face portion which is disposed between the first and second flange portions and which wholly resides within a single plane.

(2) The tailgate assembly of Claim 1 wherein said at least one stiffening member has a generally Z-shaped cross sectional area and a pair of substantially identical, opposed, and generally rectangular end flanges which are selectively coupled to said inner panel.

99 (3) (currently amended) The tailgate assembly of Claim 2 wherein said at least one stiffening member is linearly coextensive with said inner and outer panels.

(4) The tailgate assembly of Claim 3 wherein said at least one stiffening member is formed from steel.

(5) The tailgate assembly of Claim 4 wherein said at least one stiffening member is glued to said outer panel.

(6) The tailgate assembly of Claim 1 wherein said at least one stiffening member has a generally "I" shaped cross sectional area.

(7) (currently amended) A tailgate assembly comprising an outer panel which is symmetric about a ~~certain~~ first plane of symmetry; an inner panel which is selectively

Reply to Office Action of July 9, 2003

coupled to said outer panel; and at least one stiffening member which is coupled to and which is operatively contained between said inner panel and said outer panel, said at least one stiffening member having a face portion which is perpendicular to said ~~certain~~ first plane of symmetry.

(8) The tailgate assembly of Claim 7 wherein said at least one stiffening member has a generally Z-shaped cross sectional area and a pair of substantially identical, opposed, and generally rectangular end flanges which are selectively coupled to said inner panel.

(9) The tailgate assembly of Claim 7 wherein said at least one stiffening member has an "I" shaped cross sectional area.

AD (10) (currently amended) The tailgate assembly of Claim 8 wherein said at least one stiffening member is linearly coextensive with said inner and outer panels.

(11) The tailgate assembly of Claim 10 wherein said at least one stiffening member is formed from steel.

(12) The tailgate assembly of Claim 11 wherein said at least one stiffening member is glued to said outer panel.

CB (13) (currently amended) The tailgate assembly of Claim 7 wherein said inner panel is symmetric about a ~~certain~~ ^{second} plane of symmetry and wherein said face portion is perpendicular to said ~~certain~~ ^{second} plane of symmetry.

(14) (currently amended) A tailgate assembly comprising an outer panel having a first outer edge; an inner panel which is selectively coupled to said outer panel and which includes a second outer edge; and a pair of substantially identical members which are coupled to said inner and ~~said~~ outer panels, said pair of substantially identical members being linearly

A

all
coextensive to both of said respective outer edges of said inner and ~~said~~ outer panels each of said pair of substantially identical members having a broad face portion which respectively forms a right angle with respect to each of said inner and ~~said~~ outer panels, and each of said pair of substantially identical members having a pair of substantially identical flange portions which are respectively parallel to said first outer edge and said second outer edge.

(15) The tailgate assembly of Claim 14 wherein each of said pair of substantially identical members has a generally Z-shaped cross sectional area and opposed and substantially identical end flanges.

(16) The tailgate assembly of Claim 15 wherein each of said pair of substantially identical members are formed from steel.

(17) The tailgate assembly of Claim 16 wherein each of said pair of substantially identical members are glued to said outer panel.

(18) The tailgate assembly of Claim 14 wherein said inner panel includes a plurality of apertures.

(19) The tailgate assembly of Claim 18 further comprising a cover panel which selectively covers said apertures and which is selectively attached to said inner panel.

(20) The tailgate assembly of Claim 19 wherein said outer panel includes aperture and wherein said inner panel includes a tab which is selectively received by said aperture of said inner panel.